



# Scranton council backs grant for pre-arrest drug treatment



Scranton City Council on dais during regular weekly meeting on Jan. 29, 2018. JIM LOCKWOOD/STAFF PHOTO



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JIM LOCKWOOD, STAFF WRITER / PUBLISHED: JANUARY 29, 2018

SCRANTON — Scranton City Council unanimously voted to accept a \$40,000 grant that will fund the start of an innovative, pre-arrest addiction treatment program by the Police Department.

Council voted 5-0 — with President Pat Rogan, Bill Gaughan, Wayne Evans, Tim Perry and Kyle Donahue all in favor — to adopt a resolution Monday from Mayor Bill Courtright for the city to accept the grant

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from the nonprofit Northeastern Pennsylvania Health Care Foundation.

In a caucus before the meeting, Police Chief Carl Graziano explained the program called “Contract for Recovery — Alternative to Arresting Addicts.”

Under the program that aims to combat the opioid addiction crisis, certain low-level offenders could get treatment before being charged, if they enter into a “contract for recovery.” If a person successfully completes treatment, no charges would be filed for what otherwise could have been a crime, such as the misdemeanor charge of simple possession of heroin (less than 1 gram). That person will have no criminal record and, hopefully, a better chance at full recovery. However, if the person does not complete treatment, charges would move forward.

“We’re going to give it a shot. If it helps one person, it’s well worth it,” Graziano told council.

Later, during council’s regular meeting, resident Marie Schumacher expressed concerns that program costs, eligibility of participants and administration are all only vaguely defined.

Council was comfortable with the resolution and grant application, and also voted 5-0 to advance on second reading a companion ordinance to create a special account for this grant and any future grants for the treatment program.

“I am proud to support this program,” Rogan said. “If you think that addiction doesn’t touch you, it does. There’s countless stories every day of people who are affected by opioid addiction.”

In another Police Department matter, council voted 4-1 — with Gaughan the lone dissenter — to adopt a resolution authorizing the city to accept a \$175,000 state grant that the department will use toward converting the former Serrenti Memorial Army Reserve Center into an emergency services facility.

The city, which for several years has had access to and use of the Serrenti building at Pine Street and Colfax Avenue, formally acquired it in July from the federal government at no cost. At that time, Gaughan also cast the lone no vote against the acquisition, saying long-term maintenance costs are unknown. He raised the same concern Monday.

Plans call for funding the Serrenti site’s operation with grants, Perry said. The city also would sell a building on Ash Street that the Police Department uses for its training division, once it relocates to the Serrenti site.

In other matters, council unanimously took the following votes:

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## Original Woodstock festival site announces plans for 50th anniversary event at Bethel Woods

A 50th anniversary remembrance of the original Woodstock festival –the cultural touchstone moment that brought an estimated half-million people to a hillside in Bethel, N.Y., for a legendary three-day music festival – will be held at the original site, organizers announced Thursday. (read more)



## 100 Years Ago - City Council says no to firefighter's wage increase

After an hourlong meeting between city council, Mayor Alex Connell and the union representing the Scranton firefighters, council President Thomas Saville told the union, "We made it very plain at the last meeting that the wage question was closed and we absolutely refuse to open the budget again. (read more)



■ To adopt a resolution for the city to accept and disburse a \$1 million state grant for developer Charles Jefferson’s plan to renovate a former button factory in South Side at Cedar Avenue and Cherry Street as the new location of the Scranton Counseling Center, now located in two buildings in the 300 block of Adams Avenue downtown. Once SCC relocates, Jefferson would redevelop the buildings on Adams Avenue.

■ To introduce separate resolutions backing the mayor’s reappointment of Robert Timlin to a five-year term on the Scranton Redevelopment Authority, and appointment of former council President Joe Wechsler to fill a vacancy on the Scranton Parking Authority.

■ To introduce an ordinance amending the rental registration ordinance, to clarify the exemption of a duplex that has the owner living in one side and renting out the other side.

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